



What makes good sense about distributed decision-making in PSD?

- the fact that when seen as necessary...those affected are part of the process – collaboration where needed
- those in the know will work together
- skilled and informed people have the chance to participate on another level
- good choices will be made if the people who are making decisions are the most knowledgeable about the topic
- more people will be up to date and will have a greater interest in the operation of school or division
- autonomy of schools/departments to make decisions or recommendations based on their knowledge of unique needs that exist within their areas
- providing opportunities for conversation leads to a shared understanding and potentially better buy-in
- there is a culture and modeling at Division Office that supports this
- the personal ownership within a shared context
- all stakeholders feel like they have a voice
- ownership, buy-in
- building capacity
- Policy 1 – well written
- draws on leadership capacity
- ensures decisions are made closest to the issue
- draws on broad spectrum of critical knowledge and expertise
- promote collaboration and consensus building
- ensure individuals will accept responsibility
- distribute (no delegate) when you are willing to/able to give responsibility for decisions - if the ‘final’ answer must be approved or comes from another source (as opposed to responsibility) then it is not truly distributed
- collaboration time – Lead Team
- having those “closest” have input or able to make decisions
- group effort
- decisions guided by those closest to the issue
- allows for schools to have a level of uniqueness guided by their community
- keeping operational decisions for the school as close to the school as possible i.e. funding for staffing, allocation of resources to meet needs of school community
- that things which are clearly divisional are run by PSD – IT, Facilities
- you maximize the power of everyone’s expertise
- empowers people to think independently
- it allows “stars” to shine
- creates an environment where everyone is learning from everyone

What makes good sense about distributed decision-making in PSD? continued

- people closely connected to the issues are best placed to problem solve ways to deal with the issues
- easier to have a big picture of the smaller piece in terms of seeing how things will be affected on the ground
 - it's easier to see when you are closer to it – challenge too
- ability to embrace opportunities that make sense to School Community that might not be available otherwise
- creates communication
- allocates for buy-in
- ensures collaboration
- allows for working in the same direction
- it's wonderful in concept but not always applicable, however aspects are
- those with best information make decisions
- decisions made quickly
- responsive decisions
- creates accountability
- encourages communication
- should align with goals
- if you have input you can support the decision – at least understand it
- if you are close to it you might have some creative ideas
- the people with the expertise and the ground level view are highly involved, but with the balance of big picture thinking from people who have more distance....
- shared responsibility in decisions
- collective deep understanding of the criteria or situation
- drawing on the knowledge and skills of those who may be better informed
- collaborative conversation to further understanding or seeing another point of view
- pros/cons
- builds trust and ownership
- empowers people
- makes one feel part of team
- shared ownership – greater buy-in
- more ideas = better decisions
- those closest to the activity are best suited to have the strongest influence on decisions surrounding that activity
- where appropriate (as decided upon by Senior Executive) some decisions – making processes should remain centralized (e.g. instructional pod, etc.)
- to support distributed decision-making, building and maintaining leadership capacity must be a priority
- decision and implementation occurs with greater velocity and reflects the individualistic nature of each site
- increased engagement, sense of responsibility, pride etc. for the work people are engaged in FOSTER GROWTH!!!
- people take more ownership of things they help decide
- some people have more expertise in some areas, so they are in a better position to make decisions with respect to these areas
- transparency that is required when many stakeholders are involved is a positive thing
- conversations are encouraged so everyone has an understanding and a certain level of impact
- collaboration is essential in getting everyone's input – looking at issue from other perspectives is essential

What makes good sense about distributed decision-making in PSD? continued

- no one is on an island – we turn to each other for support in decision making for input of different perspectives that need to be considered
- every site is unique and their needs are unique so this allows the people closest to make the decisions
- this allows for staff to develop and fosters “out of the box” thinking (original ideas)
- prepares and allows others to share their thoughts and develop team, collaborative processes
- ultimate team-work; we are diverse in our needs across the division, and it is almost impossible to understand all the different needs
- DDM lets the knowledgeable person make the decision
- decisions are made at the individual level, class level, school level, divisional level
- empowerment
- having many “voices”
- having input
- shared leadership, shared responsibility
- empowerment, when decisions are shared, people feel more energy and there is more buy-in
- that those making the decision have the critical knowledge and expertise to do so
- PSD has the big picture of the decision
- some decisions need to be division-wide – basic funding, special education funding transportation
- input, those with the information make the decision
- shared to all parties
- big picture, benefits all – e.g. basic funding, transportation, report card, equitable
- sharing the expertise and wisdom from various people in various roles within the division – “two heads are better than one” mentality – synergy!
- allows people to see the Big Picture
- gives people an opportunity to voice ideas and concerns – gives people an opportunity to be proactive and address concerns before they arise or become major issues
- gets more people impacted by decisions involved in making the decisions
- this model allows those with the most information to make the decisions – it also is set up so that those who will make the decisions make sure they have/get the information needed to make the right decision

What questions do you have about distributed decision-making in PSD?

- who is ultimately accountable?
- do all need greater clarity in the steps and accountability measures
- does the same model set apply across the division
- what is considered to be a distributed decision-making topic?
- where does site-based fit in here?
- how decision-making responsibility will be supported by equitable resource allocation
- will the people making decisions be delegated through site-based managers
- are these decision-makers making decisions for Division or by site?
- equitable distribution
- how can we continue to increase understanding of this important aspect of how we operate as a Division i.e. centralized versus site decisions – this conversation and exercise is a good first step
- do we need more “looks like”, “feels like” information?
- have we researched the most effective DDM?
- How can all feel like they are part of the decision making?
- what best practices/approaches will engage staff?
- what best practice approaches exist to engage staff in DDM?
- how do we engage people effectively?
- still learning what/how various departments/sites and services define DDM. It does not always appear to be the same definition being applied
- having worked in a division that was more “centralized” and now Parkland/not sure I understand the difference
- there are not always things that need to be centralized for consistency and “buying power” etc.
- I don’t understand the funding portion as decisions are not controlled by pedagogy but rather by a moving target or population or needs within the population
- this stymies growth of individual sites – haves & have nots (been both)
- how do we transparently strike the balance between school/division responsibility
- this impacts school-based budgets
- are there items that should not be included in distributed decision making?
- what is the best approach to clustered based programming (i.e. ALT, REAL, CLICK, Hockey Program)?
- some information may not always be shared but is relevant – how do we get access?
- who determines the priority of issues that need the process?
- when do you know if it is the responsibility of one person to make the decision?
- how much do we apply this to students?
- how are you currently reaching out and getting as many people involved as you can?
- are there decisions or situations where having things more centralized makes sense for saving time and money with low impact to the site (i.e. such as resources, services and supplies)?
- are there decisions that could be centralized because they are not varying much anyway?
- how to help people understand and accept decisions that are made by advisory groups when they themselves were not part of the group who made the decisions
- to what extent should some decisions be more clearly communicated? – to all? – the “why”?
- generally, PSD is very good about explaining and trusting in distributed decision-making – there’s a sense that principals can speak out/up and their input is respected
- clarity and understanding of the process and who are those with the critical knowledge and expertise making the decision
- clarity on who is making decision and who is invited to provide input

What questions do you have about distributed decision-making in PSD? continued

- how often is this used?
- is the information shared as to how/why the decision was made?
- how do we communicate this?
- is it used regularly?
- do people feel that they have a say and are involved? And, if they are involved, are their ideas/questions/concerns truly being addressed or are decisions already made and the efforts are to appease people so that they can at least feel their thoughts were heard?
- when are decisions really non-negotiable? i.e. it's a decision to be made by the Superintendent or the Principal and not other stakeholders
- when are decisions seeking counsel but ultimately, one person will make the decision anyway?
- what opportunities are there to appeal decisions?
- I wonder the value of going through this with my staff
- it ties in nicely with circle of influence/circle of concern

What challenges exist with distributed decision-making in PSD?

- clarity of roles; clarity of expectations
- ensuring consistency across the division
- a challenge in defining responsibilities and what sanctions are in place if metrics are not met
- who determines equity?
- site-based versus distributed decision-making?
- when is consultation needed...when not?
- to ensure that decision makers really understand the full scope and impact of their decision
- having people understand the broader organizational context (i.e. a decision made at a particular school may have larger implications across the Division)
- clarity around which decisions are made by whom
- comparisons of what happens in various sites/departments (i.e. equity versus equality)
- distributed decision-making has not yet permeated PSD
- need to provide leaders with a structure to facilitate DDM (e.g. Beach ball conversation)
- new staff – confusion regarding new decisions and processes
- ensuring effective communication to all stakeholders
- different interpretations of situations etc.
- engaging new staff members
- process clarity
- interpretation differences
- for some things, a one stop shop for a decision would appear to be more expedient and effective rather than layered levels of approval – as long as folks understand and can accept whatever decision is arrived at ... then this can work
- funding
- staffing
- having staff feel empowered and a part of decision-making (School and Division) yet with finite resources and centralized staff resources
- stable funding
- stable staffing
- finding the strength in a distributed decision-making model and a centralized model - morphing them or combining
- there are efficiencies that exist by running some programs at the divisional level – MYALT programming, clustered academy programs
- multiple points of view – positive/negative
- too many “experts” involved
- who has ultimate responsibility
- the myth that distributed decision-making equals distributed responsibility - ultimate responsibility cannot be delegated
- can be inefficient if the decision gets bogged down
- harder to see how decisions impact the division as a whole (looking up) need to make sure that decisions don’t set precedence which causes issues for other sites
- sometimes decisions need to be centrally located (i.e. IT, Learning Services)
- sometimes you lose the critical mass in numbers when all schools are working on individual projects
- understanding the process
- not knowing all the areas or individuals expertise
- accountability

- alignment to PSD goals
- silos
- some decisions with those without expertise
- inconsistency
- ensuring everyone understands it and follows it
- when priorities are different
- when because of choices that are made some people miss key information/resources
- knowing who to involve and when
- finding the time to communicate meaningfully with everyone involved, especially in a big school
- being able to challenge and not feel personally offended
- be able to discuss without the fear of repercussion
- communicating clearly to all “what level” of decision-making do they have
- making certain that the team is feeling valued for their input
- making sure just don’t talk about it but actually do – walk the walk and talk the talk
- make sure you search for all the voices (experience out there – don’t just rely on Senior Executive and Lead Team
- encourage people to get involved – step out of the classroom
- some people still believe it is top down
- some decision-makers feel less confident than others
- there is the perceptions that centralized decision-making will decrease the discrepancy between schools (have versus have-not) I know this to be untrue but remains a challenge to convince others.
- the flow of information is sometimes a challenge due to the volume of it
- decisions made at the divisional level may not always be accepted at schools, because of the misinterpretation of the distributed decision-making model, or the advisory committee may not have consulted specifically with that person
- administrators wear MANY hats and may not be the expert in every one of those areas but is ultimately responsible for all the decisions at their site
- the challenge is that priorities can look somewhat different creating some possible inequities in various areas e.g. one school priority books versus one school priority staff or technology
- it is sometimes challenging to have “buy-in” when the decision is not mandated divisionally
- ensuring decisions made are based on data and knowledge not “off the cuff”; this means there could be a cost in ensuring the decision-maker is knowledgeable
- at times, decisions are made at a school level but are vetoed or changed by Central Office (but each member has a different answer); is this a case of unclear expectations? not sure
- equitable distribution of resources and time associated with the resources
- when decisions/groups overlap not everyone agrees
- not everyone knows/understands the big picture
- people have different views, experiences
- convincing people that their opinions really do matter – some staff members are very cynical and do not believe that their opinions will have any impact on decisions that impact their lives in the school or division
- getting enough representation from stakeholders at various levels (e.g. students – who? – just the academically gifted? – just ones with leadership skills? – just in Junior High? Which parents? Which Administration? etc.
- helping people understand the process/journey of decisions being made – to continue open communication I guess is the answer
- time factors – more people involved – more time it takes - reality

What challenges exist with distributed decision-making in PSD? continued

- most people don't want to be involved in every decision, yet many will disagree with or complain about whatever decision is made (at School or Division level). This model requires a lot of trust – trust by those impacted by a decision that they will have input that will be valued and that the decision maker will do their best to make the “best” decision. Trust also by Senior Executive that the school based admin teams are using this model and making good choices. My opinion is that this is a high trust organization for which I am very grateful.